

# **STAR LAKE CANAL SUPERFUND SITE**

## **Port Neches, Jefferson County, Texas**

### **SITE STATUS SUMMARY**

**U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (Region 6)**

**EPA ID#: TX0001414341**

**Site ID: 0605043**

**State Congressional District: 9**

**Site Status Summary Updated: August 4, 2004**



### **SITE DESCRIPTION**

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**Location:** The Star Lake Canal Superfund Site (hereinafter “the Site”) is located in Port Neches, Texas, an industrial city adjacent to the Neches River in East Texas in the center of the Beaumont-Orange-Port Arthur Golden Triangle (see the “Site Aerial Photograph” section of this summary). The Star Lake Canal confluent with the Jefferson Canal in an area between State Highway 366 and Sara Jane Road (a.k.a. East Port Neches Avenue, Port Neches Atlantic Highway, and Atlantic Road) at the geographic coordinates of approximately 29°58’30” north latitude and 93°55’12” west longitude (taken from the Port Arthur North, Texas Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series Map [1993]).

**Population:** The population of the City of Port Neches is approximately 14,452. Other communities in the area include Groves, Nederland, and Port Arthur.

**Setting:** The Site is currently defined as the lengths of two industrial canals, the Star Lake Canal and the Jefferson Canal, from their origins to the confluence of the Star Lake Canal with the Neches River. The Star Lake Canal is also known as the Defense Plant Corporation Canal, the Neches Butane Outfall Canal, the Neches Butane Products Company Outfall Canal, and the Texaco Chemical Outfall Canal. The Jefferson Canal is also known as the Texaco Chemical Company Outfall Canal, the Jefferson County Canal, the Star Lake Outfall Canal, and the Texaco Chemical Company Stormwater Canal.

The Jefferson Canal was constructed in the late 1940s as an industrial wastewater and stormwater outfall. The Star Lake Canal was constructed after 1948 for the same purpose. Both canals are currently being utilized for industrial and stormwater purposes by local chemical and other manufacturing facilities.

The Site consists of contaminated surface water sediments in the Star Lake Canal, Jefferson Canal, and Molasses Bayou. The contaminated sediments extend more than 2 miles, spanning portions of Jefferson Canal, Star Lake Canal, and the Molasses Bayou to within 1/4-mile of where the Molasses Bayou, Star Lake Canal, and Neches River converge. More than 3 miles of wetlands front the surface water in which contaminated sediments have been detected. These wetlands are habitats known to be used by State-designated threatened species. From the confluence of the Molasses Bayou, Star Lake Canal, and Neches River, surface water flows down the Neches River approximately 3 1/2 miles to Sabine Lake. Sabine Lake is used as a fishery and produced more than 1 million pounds of fish and shellfish in 1996. The land use surrounding the Site is industrial, residential, and recreational.

## **PRESENT STATUS AND ISSUES**

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- The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently performing enforcement actions to compel the Potentially Responsible Parties to perform and finance the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) currently being planned for the Site. The purpose of the RI/FS is to determine the nature and extent of contamination and to gather sufficient information about the Site to support an informed risk management decision regarding which remedy is the most appropriate for the Site.

## **WASTES AND VOLUMES**

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- The Jefferson and Star Lake Canals have received industrial wastewater and stormwater discharges from local chemical and other manufacturing facilities for a number of years. This Site was added to the National Priorities List based on evidence that hazardous substances, including chromium, copper, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, and polychlorinated biphenyls have migrated or could potentially migrate to Molasses Bayou, Star Lake Canal, Neches River, Sabine Lake, and their associated wetlands. Pentachlorophenol and toxaphene have been found in the sediments of the Jefferson Canal.
- The volumes of wastes currently present at the Site have not been determined. This information will be obtained during the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study currently being planned for the Site.

## NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST

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- The National Priorities List (NPL) is a list of national priorities among the known or threatened releases of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants throughout the United States. The NPL is intended primarily to guide the EPA in determining which sites warrant further investigation to assess the nature and extent of public health and environmental risks associated with a release of hazardous substances.
- NPL Inclusion Proposal Date: The “Proposed Rule” proposing the Site to the NPL was published in the Federal Register on July 22, 1999.
- NPL Inclusion Final Date: The “Final Rule” adding the Site to the NPL was published in the Federal Register on July 27, 2000.

## SITE AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

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- Photographs of the Site can be viewed on the internet at:  
[www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6sf/pdffiles/starlake\\_photos\\_sss\\_1.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6sf/pdffiles/starlake_photos_sss_1.pdf)

## **SITE HISTORY**

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- In response to contamination discovered during dredging in the Jefferson Canal, the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission (TNRCC, now the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality) collected sediment samples in 1996 and 1998 from the Jefferson Canal, Star Lake Canal, and wetlands bordering the Molasses Bayou. The TNRCC found elevated concentrations of chromium, copper, polynuclear aromatic hydrocarbons, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PAHs) in the canal sediments and elevated concentrations of copper, PAHs, and pesticides in the Molasses Bayou wetlands.

## **ENFORCEMENT**

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- The Superfund Enforcement Program seeks to maximize the involvement of Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) in the cleanup of Superfund sites. Statutes provide the EPA with the authority to order PRPs to investigate and clean up sites, negotiate settlements with PRPs to fund and/or perform site cleanups, and commence legal action if the PRPs do not perform and/or pay for cleanup. A primary goal of the enforcement program is to obtain consensual settlement or, if necessary, compel PRPs to implement site cleanups. The primary tool used to achieve this goal is the Administrative Order on Consent (AOC). When EPA takes response or enforcement action at a site, the enforcement program's goal is to recover the costs of those actions from the PRPs. Once a PRP(s) has agreed to take response action at a site, the goal of the enforcement program is to ensure that the studies or cleanup activities are performed correctly and in accordance with the AOC and relevant EPA guidance.
- The EPA issued General Notice Letters (GNLs) to the PRPs on July 11, 2001. The GNLs notified the PRPs of their potential liability that they may incur or may have incurred with respect to the Site. The GNLs also notified the PRPs of the potential response activities at the Site which they may be asked to perform or finance at a later date. The EPA is currently evaluating the responses received from the PRPs.
- The EPA issued 104(e) Information Request Letters to the PRPs on July 17, 2001, to learn more about the Site. The EPA is currently evaluating the responses received from the PRPs.
- The EPA issued Special Notice Letters (SNLs) to the PRPs on December 17, 2002. The SNLs notified the PRPs that the EPA has determined that they may be liable for the cleanup of the Site. The SNL's requested reimbursement of costs incurred by the EPA in responding to the investigation of the Site. The SNLs also requested that the PRPs respond with a "good-faith offer," to perform the RI/FS, within sixty (60) days of their receipt of the letter.

- The EPA is currently identifying additional PRPs and evaluating additional enforcement actions to compel the PRPs to perform and finance the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study currently being planned for the Site.

## **HUMAN HEALTH AND ECOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENTS**

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- Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessments are an integral part of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) currently being planned for the Site.
- A Human Health Risk Assessment estimates the current and possible future risks if no action were taken to clean up a site. The EPA's Superfund risk assessors determine how threatening a hazardous waste site is to human health and the environment. They seek to determine a safe level for each potentially dangerous contaminant present (e.g., a level at which ill health effects are unlikely and the probability of cancer is very small). Living near a Superfund site doesn't automatically place a person at risk, that depends on the chemicals present and the ways people are exposed to them.
- An Ecological Risk Assessment is defined as a process that evaluates the likelihood that adverse ecological effects are occurring or may occur as a result of exposure to one or more stressors. A stressor is any physical, chemical, or biological entity that can induce an adverse ecological response. Adverse responses can range from sublethal chronic effects in individual organisms to a loss of ecosystem function. Only chemical or physical stressors are subject to risk management decisions at Superfund sites.
- Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessments will be performed during the RI/FS currently being planned for the Site.

## **RECORD OF DECISION**

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- The final remedy (cleanup alternative) for a site is published in a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD is the official documentation of how the EPA considered the remedial alternatives and why the EPA selected the final remedy. Before a ROD can be finalized, the EPA must provide a Proposed Plan for public review and comment. This plan summarizes the remedial alternatives presented in the analysis of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) and identifies the preferred alternative, the rationale for that preferred alternative, and documents that support the EPA's decision.
- A ROD has not been signed for the Site. A Proposed Plan will be presented to the public during the latter part of the RI/FS currently being planned for the Site. The RI/FS is expected to be completed approximately 1 ½ years from the start date.

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

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- “Community involvement” is the name the EPA uses to identify its process for engaging in dialogue and collaboration with communities affected by Superfund sites. The mission of the Superfund Community Involvement Program is to advocate and strengthen early and meaningful community participation during the EPA’s remedial activities at a Site. The EPA’s community involvement program is founded on the belief that people have a right to know what the EPA is doing in their community and to have a say in it. Its purpose is to give people the opportunity to become involved in the EPA’s activities and to help shape the decisions that are made at a site.
- Community Involvement Plan: The Community Involvement Plan (CIP) specifies the community involvement activities that the EPA expects to undertake during the remedial activities planned for the Site. A CIP, based on community interviews and other relevant information about the Site, will be prepared during the early phases of the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study (RI/FS) currently being planned for the Site.
- Public Meetings: Public meetings will be scheduled during the early phases of the RI/FS currently being planned for the Site.
- Fact Sheets: Fact sheets will be prepared as necessary during the planning and implementation of the RI/FS. These fact sheets will be filed at the Site’s repository and distributed to people on the mailing list. Anyone who desires to be placed on the mailing list to receive current information about the Site is encouraged to call 1-800-533-3508. This Site Status Summary can be found on the internet at the following address:

<http://www.epa.gov/earth1r6/6sf/pdf/files/starlake.pdf>

- Site Repository: The purpose of the Site’s Repository is to provide the public a location near their community to review and copy background and current information about the Site. The Site’s repository is located at:

Effie & Wilton Hebert Public Library  
2025 Merriman  
Port Neches, TX 77651  
(409) 722-4554  
<http://www.ptn.lib.tx.us>

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

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- A Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) is for a local citizens’ group to secure the services of a technical advisor to increase citizen understanding of information that will be developed about the Site during the Superfund process. By law, only one grant for up to

\$50,000 may be awarded to a citizens' group for this Site. To be eligible for a grant, a group must incorporate. Also, the applicant must meet a 20 percent matching requirement, which may be in cash or donated services. If you are interested in applying for a TAG, please call Ms. Beverly Negri (TAG Coordinator) at (214) 665-8157 or toll-free at 1-800-533-3508.

- Availability Notice: An Availability Notice for the TAG was published in the "Port Arthur News" on August 28, 2000.
- Letters of Intent: The TAG application process begins when a group of individuals affected by the Site submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the EPA. A LOI to apply for a TAG was received by the EPA on October 12, 2000, from Ms. Edna Gonzales (Southeast Texas Procter Street Center, Inc.; 3046 Procter St.; Port Arthur, Texas, 77642; 409-983-2019). A TAG application has not been submitted.

## **SITE TEAM**

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### U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

- Rafael Abrego Casanova (Remedial Project Manager, Environmental Scientist, Bilingual - Spanish/English):  
Contact for "any" questions about the Site and this Site Status Summary;  
214-665-7437\*; E-Mail Address, casanova.rafael@epa.gov
- Rafael Abrego Casanova (Community Involvement Coordinator, Bilingual - Spanish/English):  
Contact for "community involvement" questions.
- Ed Quiñones (Attorney, Bilingual - Spanish/English):  
Contact for "legal" questions; 214-665-8035\*; E-Mail Address, quinones.edwin@epa.gov
- Lydia Johnson (Enforcement Officer):  
Contact for "cost recovery" questions; 214-665-8419\*; E-Mail Address, johnson.lydia@epa.gov
- Arnold Ondarza (Regional Public Liaison, Bilingual - Spanish/English):  
Contact for "dispute resolution;" 303-312-6777\*; E-Mail Address, ondarza.arnold@epa.gov
- Karen Bond (State Coordinator):  
Contact for State and EPA "cooperative agreements;" 214-665-6682\*; E-Mail Address, bond.karen@epa.gov

- \* EPA (Region 6) Superfund Toll-Free Telephone Number: 1-800-533-3508.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ):

- Robert Wucher (Project Manager):  
(512) 239-2494\*\*; E-Mail Address, [rwucher@tceq.state.texas.us](mailto:rwucher@tceq.state.texas.us)
- \*\* TCEQ Toll-Free Telephone Number: 1-800-633-9363.

## **REALIZED CLEANUP BENEFITS**

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- The investigation and cleanup of the Site will ensure the protection of human health and the environment. Specific cleanup benefits will be identified during the Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study currently being planned for the Site.